propagandist rehetoric and empty public relation gimmicks of this nature, in their futile bid to deflect internaitonal focus from Pakistan's ongoing sponsorship of cross border terrorism in India.

(b) and (c) No, Sir. Pakistan's negative and hostile approach towards India remains completely unchanged. During a public address on Sth February 2002, the President of Pakistan stated that *"the Indian Position that Kashmir is an integral part of India is untenable and therefore unacceptable"*. He also emphasized that the issue of Jammu and Kashmir remained central to India-Pakistan relations. It is also quite evident that despite its positive assurances to the international community to end the use of terrorism as an instrument of state policy, Pakistan is unwilling to take effective and irreversible steps to end its sponsorship of cross border terrorism in India.

The State of Jammu & Kashmir is, and will remain, an integral part of India. A part of the territory of the State is under the forcible and illegal occupation of Pakistan. Government are firmly resolved to take all necessary steps to preserve the security and territorial integrity of the country.

Vishva Hindi Sammelan

†2714. SHRI DEVI PRASAD SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) when the next Vishva Hindi Sammelan is going to be held along with the name of country where it is going to be held; and

(b) Government's view with regard to providing an opportunity of meetingholding discussion to higher officers of official language working in diferent Ministries, banks and PSUs with Hindi scholars at interntional forum on this occasion?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) The proposal for holding the next World Hindi

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Conference was received from two countries, namely, Suriname and The Netherlands. The venue and the dates are under active consideration of the Ministry and a decision will be taken soon.

(b) It has always been the endeavour of this Ministry to provide all possible interaction between the officiaKnonofficial Hindi scholars and representatives from the concerned sectors in India and the international Hindi scholars on occasion of such international conferencesfeminars.

Increase in Passport Charges

2715. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently increased the passport charges;

(b) if so, the reasons and justification therefor;

(c) whether the system of issuing passports have been decentralised and made easy; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Yes, sir.

(b) The passport fee was last revised in July 1993. The rising cost of issue of passports, the present and projected cost of modernisation of offices, computerisation of processes, construction and renting of new and modern office premises and for reimbursing the cost to the State Governments for accepting and scrutinising passport applications as well as the cost involved in police verification are the primary reasons for the increase in passport fee.

(c) and (d) The Government has decided to decentralise the passport services and to bring these services closer to the people. Under this scheme, the passport applicants can deposit their filled passport application forms through the designated speed post centres and the office of the District Magistrate/Superintendent of Police in every state throughout the country. It is proposed to establish